

IT Matters - Episode 21

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SPEAKERS

Narrator, Kris Moniz, Aaron Bock



Narrator 00:07

Welcome to the IT Matters podcast, where we explore why IT matters and matters pertaining to IT. Here's your host, Aaron Bock.



Aaron Bock 00:17

Thanks for joining us again. Welcome back to another episode of the IT Matters podcast. I hope that the end of your year is successful and going well. Once again, I'm your host, Aaron Bock. And we've got a great episode today. And I get the pleasure of introducing our guest. And we'll have a fantastic conversation on data and analytics. But before we get started, I wanted to share, you know, over the last, we've talked a lot about AI this past year, and what's happening with AI. And in since one of our last episodes, I thought I would share, they've been publishing a lot of the stats around Copilot as it's come out. And so, you know, if you're not familiar with it, Copilot, they let some of the larger organizations in the world beta test co pilot, we may talk about this a little bit today. But some of the stats that they've published are that 78% of Copilot beta testers felt they were more productive. That's a stat from Microsoft. I read another stat on a DevOps website that 20% of folks using GitHub, GitHub Copilot, which is for developers feel that they are more efficient with GitHub Copilot. And so it's interesting, you know, we talk a lot about efficiency. Why? What's happening in IT? What are the trends? AI is a big one, data efficiency. So the stats are now finally coming out. We just got access to the Copilot, kind of the copilot full test and we're seeing a lot of productivity increases around it. So more to come, I think you're gonna see Copilot be a bigger impact in 2024. And so keep following it when you do get access to it, play around with it. It's very cool. It's got a lot of awesome features that you can use in your organization. And I think it's going to be a big game changer. So with that, welcome to the show. We have Kris Moniz from Centric Consulting, he's a data and analytics practice lead. I'm gonna let Kris introduce himself. So Kris, welcome to the show. Thanks for joining us. It's the last episode we're gonna film before the holidays, so thank you for being our final guest of 2023.



Kris Moniz 02:21

K Kris Moniz 02:31

Thanks for having me. Yeah. So you introduced me already. My name is Kris Moniz. I've been here with Centric for six years, I run the the data practice for the company. And I've been working in this space, the vast majority of my career, about 23 years now.

A Aaron Bock 02:49

That's awesome. And I know our listeners are going to be interested to hear this because we talk a lot about data. But if you could give them a little background on you, and also Centric Consulting and what you guys do.

K Kris Moniz 03:00

Sure. So I mean, the easy part is me first. I've been focusing on IT my entire career since 95. And I've been spending since about 2000, focused on data. And the vast majority of that time on data has been focused on insurance companies. I've probably worked with a couple dozen insurance companies at this point over the course of my career. It's something I'm pretty passionate about. And it's something we do a lot of here at Centric. Centric is a management services and technical services provider. We do all kinds of projects for clients, everything from operational, operational excellence, being able to do process transformation, and that sort of thing through large scale data projects, which is what we do, and absolutely everything in between, custom application development, organizational change management, we generally try to be just really solid partners for our for our clients.

A Aaron Bock 04:00

And we've seen it and so let's let's dive in. So you mentioned large scale data strategy. Let's kind of start with just like a very basic question, because we have listeners that are, you know, very familiar with this and the enterprise. But then we also have a lot of listeners who I think have never had to build a data strategy and they're having to so like, in your mind, what does it mean to even have a data strategy? And where do you start?

K Kris Moniz 04:31

For myself, and for us in general, data strategy we've seen, we see two types, right? The type that works and the type that doesn't. So the type that doesn't frequently gets heavily focused on technology, and trying to understand what is the latest and greatest technology out there, and how do I fit that into this ecosystem I have, how do I modernize the current tools I have to use this newer technology? And that ends up becoming the beginning and end of it, you will look at those strategies and you see a lot of transition diagrams of current state architecture and then I have the five transition states and I finally see the end state. And that is 90% of their strategy. And all of those things are necessary for really functional data strategy but it is certainly not where you start. It is one of the many things you have to do to get a functional data strategy. We always start with, what is it that the business is trying to accomplish over the next three to five years? Ideally, when we're dealing with a client, if they already have a three to five year business plan, that's where you start. And very quickly, you turn into interviews and

conversations with business owners trying to understand not what technology do they want, they frequently don't care. You're trying to figure out what capabilities are they trying to enable? What's the business architecture that they're going for in the future? And what's driving need of each of those capability requirements? And then how do you translate that into an overall solution and an architecture that's going to help them get there? And that is where you start wrapping your strategy. And once you know those things, it becomes a broad conversation about what comes first, what comes second, why, what lift does this capability bring you over what period of time, and how quickly can we make that capability happen? Data strategies have to give incremental benefit as they get executed. Otherwise, they're really pretty presentations that you spend a lot of money on, and they don't get well.

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Aaron Bock 06:45

So let's, let's go. Yeah, it looks funny. Kris has a visitor in the background. So you guys could see if you're watching on YouTube, he's got his, his pet in the in the window, who looks very funny. Let's go back to what you said. So I want to go two different ways. But let's start with the what's not working, you said it's just tech, and it's just kind of a bunch of slides. And here's how we're gonna get there. In your opinion, how does an organization end up with that being the like, what they're what they're executing? Is there a, is there a theme? Is there a, Hey, this is how they typically got there? Like, how does an organization end there? And what do you see, most likely?

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Kris Moniz 07:24

We usually see two different ways that that happens. One is the idea of a data strategy is an initiative that starts and ends in IT. It is somewhere in IT, there is a decision made that we're supposed to have one of these things we do not, we need to go forward and make one and they make it in a vacuum inside of IT. You know, it's a common saying that we we use a lot and we talk to our clients beyond data strategies, data implementations. One of the biggest failure points we often see is that sort of Field of Dreams scenario, if you build it, they will come. And when you take that approach, what ends up happening is you build it, and yeah, they don't come, because it's not built with them in mind. So what we end up seeing is, there's that scenario, that happens all too often. And it usually ends up being highly technical. The other scenario is, we see an inordinate number of clients will go out and they will look for a very, very, very detailed data strategy that they will spend a lot of money on. And they will make sure that they buy it from a very large name provider, right. There's that old saying of you know, pick your top tier provider, nobody ever got fired for hiring them, type of thing. And what they frequently end up getting is they get this very, very high level, very, sort of advanced, and well, frankly, very high minded, deep strategy that goes about 1000 feet in, and stops. So it's a ton of very aggressive ideas and this is where you need to be. And there's no action in it. It stops before it gets to the here's the roadmap, here's how you're going to have to deliver this thing in increments, and the type of folks that you're going to need, the cost estimates and all those things. And sure enough, many, many times we end up getting phone calls of well, we just did this was such and such, and here's what we got, and now we don't know what to do with it. So it's those are the two that we see most often. And it's unfortunate because they both cost time, money and a basically lost opportunity. And those are the things you could have avoided.

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Aaron Bock 09:49

So on that so let's let's just pretend that you know I'm in an organization. I am in IT and in IT I do feel that my organization, one lacks a data strategy, two hasn't really gone through this exercise. Like what can I do as an IT person to help drive that, so that it doesn't end up like the project that you described?

K

Kris Moniz 10:11

Well, first and foremost, you have to start identifying potential business side stakeholders, and champions.

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Aaron Bock 10:19

Give me an example of a common one.

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Kris Moniz 10:20

Sure. So um, as I said earlier, I spent a lot of time in insurance. So I'll, I'll use an insurance example, though very applicable in other industries as well. You're going to be looking at folks likely in underwriting and folks in business development or sales executives, basically folks that deal with customers directly or with agencies. So if you think of this in terms of another company, you're basically thinking of your product delivery teams and your sales teams. The folks who are going to benefit the most from having access to data and being able to be more nimble about how they execute data and the business when they get it. And find some really key use cases from those folks, that can bring a lot of lift to the company. And then use those use cases and work with your team, just try to think through a couple of solutions to solve those use cases. And go to your finance team for, hey, we want to tackle this use case, we see a lot of lift here that we can get for the organization, we've got sponsorship from the sales team. And we want to show you a way that we can start to do these things, and give them a proof point. So when finance comes back in four months, and you've actually delivered something for sales, when you deliver that thing for sales, you've got to deliver not just the capability they asked for, but you've got to deliver it with a definition from them of here's why that capability was valuable to us and here's why that capability is valuable to the company. So when you go back to finance, you can say we delivered it, they're using it. And then in a couple of months, you can show and here's the lift they said the company would get and it's happening. So you can then talk through look, this is a small example and it's very targeted and it's very tactical. And if we want to start seeing much more strategic outcomes in the longer term, where we're not doing this, in you know, really small increments, and, frankly, in a bit of a vacuum, right, we just did this for sales. If this was strategic, we would be roping in every part of the organization. And we probably would have uncovered some parallels in a couple of different pockets of our value chain that could have gotten use out of this as well. This is just a hint of the types of things we can accomplish if we get strategic. And then from there, that's where you usually start reaching out and saying, Look, we can only do so much with what we have. And while we think we may have a team that can maintain something like this into the future, we don't have a team right now that can build all of this. And that's where you start saying, Yes, we're going to bring in some folks that can help who have experience

doing this, who can help turn this your vision into our vision, and then use that to help get you overall a bit of a high level estimate to go back to that CFO and say, This is what we should it's going to take for us to get to a real strategy. And then out of that, here's what we can expect in terms of mid to long term deliverables that will help us get to a broader vision.

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Aaron Bock 13:36

That's a great point, Chris. And so I want to take it back. So you gave earlier the two scenarios of the data strategy that's not working. You also gave an example of how you would do it, which is go to the business plan, which is interesting. And business plan, three year plan, I'm sure there's different documents and different types of organizations. But why does that work? What are you looking at on the business plan? What are you looking for to say, here's why we really need to have this data strategy. Here's how we build it. Like why does that make it successful?

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Kris Moniz 14:09

It's a good question. So it makes us successful for a couple of reasons, assuming they have it. And if they don't, we help them build one. But assuming they have it, it helps make it successful, because at the end of the day, a data strategy is not about technology. It's a component, but it's not what it's about. Probably the best way I've ever seen it worded and it's a relatively new concept that is starting to take hold in the last 10 years or so is you always had an overall technology architecture and enterprise architecture. And within that you have the data architecture and application architecture. But about 10 years or so the concept of a business architecture really started taking off and I really love that concept because what that brings to the board is this idea of, frankly, if I own a business, I don't really care what my data architecture is, or my enterprise architecture or my application architecture. I care about what I make, what I sell, and my customers. And if I'm a good company, I care about the team that helps me do all that, my employees, right? None of those things are my technology. My technology is an enabler of all of those things. So if you don't start a strategy, with your business architecture, which really or your business plan, which outlines your business architecture, which really identifies what is it I'm trying to sell, who am I trying to sell it to, how do I need to support my team in doing so, and how do I measure my overall success, and deal with my customers? If my plan doesn't start there, then how do I know whether or not my technology that I'm spending money on and I'm investing time to integrate and configure is actually driving any value or even potentially driving negative value in my organization? Right? How many times have you heard about an application or data solution, anything, any piece of technology in the business where the the general theme of those who were forced to use it is this detracts from my day, it doesn't help, it doesn't bring me lift, it actually makes it harder for me to do my job. That is a clear sign that there was not forethought of how this helps enable success. It was someone decided they needed it.

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Aaron Bock 16:46

Yeah well, but like so, you know, in the work that you all do at Centric, I think this is something that I think other parts of the business struggle with, right? Take take other IT problems in the past, like, how to do infrastructure, or how to do Telco or whatever it was. There's this like,

tangible, I can touch it, feel it, I can see the results once I do it, right? Like I had a datacenter, I'm gonna get my datacenter from 100 racks down to 50. And it's a very noticeable thing. Like we spend less on power, we spend less on this. To me, the hard thing about data is that it's just this like, it's floating everywhere. Everything's a data point, right? So when you have a data strategy, what does that mean? And I guess I'm curious, like, on your engagements that you're working with, after you kind of have acknowledged or an organization says, Yeah, I want to work with Centric on building this data strategy. And you've come up with these use cases. And I assume you kind of know where there's ROI to be had and things like that. What is it that you're actually doing in those hours spent outside of the interviews and building like the strategy, if you will? What is the end result? You know what I mean? Like, what's the tangible thing that like that CFO would then say, Okay, we've got this.

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Kris Moniz 18:11

Got it. So aside from usually a rather lengthy document that gets delivered, which outlines a series of things, and it starts with heat maps, things along the lines of here's all the use cases we gathered. A common thing you're going to see early on is sort of this quadrant map that lays out, you know, effort to complete versus value delivery. And you really are looking for sort of that bottom right quadrant of high value, low effort, as sort of your early on hits, and items that are drive adoption. You'll see information around, you will see those transitional architectural states, but it's only there to help identify, this is why we believe the investment is going to be as follows because these systems will be able to be deprecated, after a certain point, those sorts of things.

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Aaron Bock 19:01

Wait, Kris, I don't want to cut you off. But really, you just brought up a really interesting point that I think is very valuable. So you mentioned like the quadrant, bottom right? High impact, low lift. Can you give an example of like, doesn't have to be specific, but maybe what's an example of a type of where that would be relevant, like, where would you commonly see that?

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Kris Moniz 19:25

Oh, that I mean, that, frankly, varies per company. I can try to think of, I'll actually give a current example. Without naming names, of course, right. But there's a carrier, an insurance carrier, that we're working with right now, where we put in a very large cloud data solution for them. And they were trying to figure out, what's the next step on adding capability to the platform, and we talked through with them and we worked through this exact kind of a prioritization process. And what they came up with was, okay, I could invest three months and implementing this part of the platform, which was going to be basically getting down to the policy profitability, which is pretty good thing to be able to get insurance. And you'd be surprised how few insurance companies actually know that. Or, I could spend three months with you guys on building out a complete Analytics Suite around policy submissions and policy quotes, same amount of time, the fundamental difference was, while understanding that profit information was of value. It's something they could kind of do today, it was hard, it was very manual, and it wasn't as granular and the benefits we gave you that detail were reasonable, right? It was more cost savings than anything else. On the submission and quote stuff, which is

basically them looking at real time activity of who's coming to us looking for us to underwrite a policy, and what are the outcomes? Where are, you know, where are we disqualifying them? Where are we saying, yes, we want this business but we're for some reason not getting it. They had no insight in any of that right now. And they fundamentally knew that if they did, they could get much more lift, they could start targeting policies a lot earlier in the process, where they knew they had a compelling story, they had a compelling rate, etc. And so they opted to go that route. And the benefits have been massive for them, they now have insight to data that in their 100 year history they've never been able to see before, and their entire sales team is well, that's not an exaggeration to say slightly flipping out for it, because they now have daily data of I now know how to prioritize my day, I know what agencies I want to call and their hit rates are going up. That's it's a tangible benefit, same amount of time, same amount of investment, but now they're registering top line growth is result of that investment rather than long term potentially being able to realize some cost savings from the other.

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Aaron Bock 22:13

Yeah, it's a great example. And it's a theme that we've heard on this podcast, and just from, from us talking to our customers over the years, the most success is when you have kind of a top down business outcomes driven approach. And I know that sounds very cliché, but like, you're right, like, and we talk a lot about IT, it's the name of the podcast. IT does matter. And it drives a lot of this, but without the business in mind, and what's your going to do and in that case, you know, you're making it easier for the insurance people to do their jobs. The ROI on it is it's a business outcome. It's better experience. And it's driving, like behaviors for 5 to 10 years. And this is kind of we're talking about the data strategy. So for those of you who have not done this or haven't been that involved, like it's important to understand kind of the basics of it. So Kris, I want to flip the script a little bit and talk about what everyone wants to talk about, which is AI now. And you can't turn the TV on, AI is everywhere. AI is in some worlds doing people's jobs in some worlds so far from it. And so let's talk about like AI and data. How do they correlate? What does it mean? What are you seeing from your perspective, like for AI implementations? I know from our perspective, you can't have AI without data. And that's the common thing that people miss. But like, What is your perspective on where we're at with AI? And where data strategies are kind of aligning?

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Kris Moniz 23:44

You know, it's, it's interesting. There's two pieces that for us are critical when it comes to AI. Strategy is one of them. Governance is the other. And I would argue in certain areas, governance is actually more crucial than the strategy. The only reason in the totality it's not is because part of your data strategy should be how are you going to handle data governance, right, you shouldn't, standing up a Data Governance Program entirely by its own without a better understanding of how it impacts your strategy is a recipe for disaster. But the reason governance becomes so important, and partners heavily with strategy is there's really two components. Everything that everybody sees these days, that is really exciting the world about AI is really one small sliver of AI. It's large language models. Which I mean, it's a combination of a couple of different disciplines within AI but it's still a small part of the overall umbrella that AI covers. The difference is this finally is hitting in a way that everybody, even folks that didn't used to really care about tech, it can introduce itself into their lives in ways that are just, feel a bit Star Trek-y, you know what I mean? It's like I, I didn't think that would ever really happen.

But now, you can see how someone in my lifetime probably in the next 12 months, is going to create a prototype as a lark of the computer on the Enterprise using speech to text, text to speech and an LLM.

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Aaron Bock 25:22

Yeah, you're right. And it's happening faster and faster.

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Kris Moniz 25:27

Oh, all the time. It's shocking. But what it really comes down to if you want to leverage those things in your business, it doesn't become valuable until those large language models can access and understand your data. So the questions you ask, can get answered relevant to your business. And if you don't have a clear strategy and governance, two things are gonna be this, one, all of those tools today exist in the cloud. You're not going to get an LLM system that you can put on premise that is of any real value, that you're not going to pay a massive arm and a leg for the hardware for. Two, once you get that information into the cloud, if your data is not clean, understood and secure, the outcomes are going to be catastrophic. So, you know, something folks heard a lot of when ChatGPT first came out is a lot of folks in the news, were talking about how it likes to hallucinate. Which, in the later versions, they've kind of figured some of that stuff out. But the reality is, is it wasn't hallucinating. It was misinterpreting data, both the question you were asking and the underlying data that was reading the answer. You start introducing a system like that into your environment and you know, we are a huge partner with Microsoft, we do tons of work with them, big fans, and they have inside of Copilot, their architecture is really cool. And part of what that architecture enables is for Copilot to read any data in your tenant. And it does that so when you ask Copilot a question, Copilot has context with which to answer it, right. But they also stress extremely heavily, and as partners of theirs, we do the same with our clients that you need to be ready with strong security and strong governance in place before you turn something like that on because the best example I can give, which I'm sure keeps CHROs and CFOs up at night is great, you turned it on and very quickly found out the hard way that somebody put a spreadsheet out in a share somewhere. They didn't secure it properly, but it was never really a concern because nobody knows that share exists except that person. And in that spreadsheet is a list of all the employees in the company, and their salaries, and social security numbers, etc., relevant data they needed for their job and they didn't realize where they had it, it wasn't necessarily as secure as they wanted. You know, OpenAI doesn't know that. It only knows what you tell it and your security model. So it's going to see that file, it's going to consume it, put it in this beautiful graph database so it can search against it when you ask it a question. And the first employee that comes along and says, asks your internal OpenAI service the question of, what should I be making as a SQL DBA, ChatGBT is going to see that file and if it sees a role in there called SQL DBA, it's going to start spitting back numbers, because you haven't told it that that person shouldn't have access to that file. And suddenly, you're going to have information in the hands of people that you never want it in their hands.

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Aaron Bock 29:10

I think that so I appreciate the example you just gave and I think that's where people are really scared. And it's not, you know, once again, we deal with companies that are at all phases of

their, their journeys with AI and data and cloud. The part I think people have a hard time wrapping their head around is like a CEO of a business that's successful that does X, right, they sell some widget to do blank and they're really good at it. They struggle to understand like, what are the security risks, like how does it actually affect me and that's a really good example of like, Hey, you keep your files in a place you've always kept your files, and now you enable this tool that you've heard is so great online, across your organization and some IT person convinced you that like you should use it. Now all of a sudden you have this risk that you didn't even know before and now all of a sudden you're you're reeling. And it's it's quick like the how fast that can happen is so real. So I love the example you gave, and for anyone listening, that should hopefully help you understand like how quickly this can impact your organization, especially with Copilot and others. I want to ask you another broader question. You know, like over the last, we'll call it 5 to 10 years, compliance has become a big, you know, hot topic here, like you have GDPR and CCPA and I'm not going to define the laws go look them up for anyone listening, but how do you navigate those laws? And are the laws keeping up with what's happening in data and AI, and all things between?

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Kris Moniz 30:44

So I think honestly, the easier part of that question to answer is the second half. Because the reality is, they're not. I think, I'm a huge fan of irony. And I think probably the funniest thing I have heard in many years is the governing body in the EU that stood up the law around GDPR and enforces it, I want to say it was about a year ago, ended up in the news for guess what, they were violating GDPR. Not intentionally, they had not adequately managed their own systems in a way that allowed them to be compliant with their own law. And one of the things that it exposed was in practice, in principle GDPR is a great and necessary law. It's something that as a person who has personal data that somehow manages to get places that I've never even talked to, I'd love the idea of I have the right to tell you, you have no right to that, practically, how easy is it to make those things real? And what is the burden you're placing on companies when you say you have to do that? Right. Again, not to belabor the world of insurance companies, but some of the largest insurance companies in the world have dozens of systems that contain client information, policyholder information, some of these systems are still 30 years old. They're running on mainframes, AS/400s, S/390s excetera, systems that were built way before the concept of GDPR was even thought up. And trying to take 30 year old technology and retrofit it in a way where it can be compliant with these modern day laws is extremely cost prohibitive. And it raises a question of, okay, what's the benefit that that law is bringing? And what is the pain that it is exhibiting, it is exerting on businesses who have to comply with it. And as a consumer, I see the upside of, I get to tell them to get rid of my data. But am I seeing the downside of how much is that increasing my cost of consuming what they have to provide me? A number I'd love to see is how much has the average insurance policy gone up since the creation of GDPR and CCPA? How much has it gone up as a direct result of needed technology investments and attempts to comply with those laws?

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Aaron Bock 33:32

I don't I don't know the answer but I would also love to know the answer because insurance premiums and everything are going way up and consolidation is happening. Not to go off on the insurance tangent but with GDPR with compliance with increased natural, I mean insurance companies have been, it's been a crazy industry the last few years. Yeah, and I agree with you.

I mean, GDPR it's good in theory, is it keeping up with the pace? Is it doing what it's supposed to do? I would argue maybe. I guess let's talk a little bit, let's go back to the cloud conversation because you mentioned Centric, you guys help with the cloud strategy and the data strategy. Cloud has been this conversation for 10 years that I think data AI is becoming. So what does it mean now to have you know, like a data strategy? How does it align with a cloud strategy? What do you, what do you advise a customer on who's kind of going down this path with both?

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Kris Moniz 34:39

Well, first things first. If we're doing a data strategy for a client, we are immediately talking with them about you should be thinking cloud first.

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Aaron Bock 34:49

How come?

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Kris Moniz 34:50

Simply put, the value prop and the cost associated with not just keeps getting bigger, right. So as I said at the beginning of the podcast, I've spent a ton of years in insurance. And I remember when I started in insurance, Teradata was huge. And if you wanted to get serious about data, you needed something like that you need one of these massive appliance systems. Teradata, Exadata, you take your pick. And those systems were immensely cost prohibitive. If you didn't have millions of dollars to spend on the hardware, you weren't getting that functionality. And what that meant was 15 years ago, the vast majority of carriers really didn't have data solutions. The big ones started to and they started to invest, they could afford it. The smaller ones, you know, tier threes and lowers, they couldn't afford that kind of stuff. As Cloud has come along, you can build solutions today in a cloud environment that are as capable as what those massive tier one carriers spent 10s of millions of dollars on 15 years ago, for a 10th or less of that price. And if you don't want to do it in the cloud, you're going to spend a whole lot more than that, and you're going to lose functionality. You're gonna lose the ability to scale on demand, which is just a massive capability of the platform as a service brings you, you're gonna lose the ability to get access to all of the latest tools that are coming out, you know, OpenAI is an example, right? If you go to Microsoft, they have AOAI, Azure OpenAI. You can't get that outside of Azure. You want to get scalable systems, right, you this used to happen all the time, it would be when you're building your data center, you had to buy 10 to 20% more hardware than you needed right now, because you needed the ability to scale as you needed it. You don't need to do that in the cloud, you go in, you set up your system, you set it up at a certain level based on your current poll and the amount of concurrency you have in consumption. And you could actually automate it to monitor, monitoring, excuse me monitor this level of consumption, and in real time, scale up and acquire more resources until utilization drops, and then scale back down. Yeah. And that means that whereas before that would have required you to upfront buy hardware, that would be sitting idle for a long period of time. Now, it's no, once a month, for about four hours after year-end close, everything gets hit, like

because everybody wants to know where the numbers are at. So for four hours a month, I need twice as much hardware. Do I really want to buy twice as much hardware for four hours a month? No, I'm effectively leasing it for those four hours, and then I get it back.

A

Aaron Bock 37:52

Yeah, that's it. Yeah, it's it's a great use case. I mean, I It's interesting, because we still work with both as Opkalla. And you know, we have a lot of folks that are still using on prem hardware. And, and I think there's been this, you know, over the last 10 years, it's always been, you can do it on prem a lot less expensive, but it's not as efficient. And I think that's changing because of a lot of factors. But COVID, spread everyone out, the amount of data that's being captured is increasing so fast that you'd be buying hardware every day, if you if you really want to keep up and then you know, the larger the organization, the more procurement processes you have to go through. So it's just way easier to scale. And then you start looking at the costs of scaling, increase so much that you actually it's soft costs. And that's the evaluation we've been looking at over the last, you know, 5, 10 years as AI has kind of become a thing. And now it's here, and it's like, holy crap, this, this data footprint is getting so massive, so quickly. All right, we need to scale with it. So I agree with you. We see that commonly. But before I get to our kind of our keystone question, we always ask all of our guests to wrap up, I'm curious, in your perspective, you know, your Data Analytics Practice Lead, what a you know, obviously AI is here, right? And we're talking about it in every form of life. But what what specific emerging tech or tools are you seeing in the data analytics space that you are particularly excited about? Doesn't have to be a specific tool, but it can be a group of tools, or whatever it may be.

K

Kris Moniz 39:32

Probably the one I'm most excited about, it does align pretty heavily with large language models. Something that every data consumer has wanted for ages is the ability to ask an analytics environment a question and just get an answer. And in the past, that's always you know, that started as you've got tons of lists, reports, and you got to figure out which one to go to and eventually you had to figure out how to put stuff in Excel and do filtering. More modern days, it's I've got access to a series of dashboards and I got to figure out, are any of them capable of answering that question? And if so how do I have to slice and dice things. And inevitably, the better you get at it, the more you realize that I've only been able to go so far without being able to customize this thing, like on my own. And not everybody's going to have that skill set nor do you want everybody to have to have that skill set. And something that I know Microsoft is working on right now, as I'm sure their competitors are, as well. But we do tons of work in PowerBI. It's a really cool tool, right? And one of the downsides is exactly that. If you don't know how to use PowerBI, you're not gonna be able to customize things if your questions start getting more granular beyond what the dashboard was designed to answer. Well, they're working on a Copilot for PowerBI, where you will fundamentally have the ability to just say, please answer me this question. And Copilot will have the ability to look at everything that your PowerBI environment has access to, and formulate an answer. And that's fundamentally scary that, okay, how are you going to know you can trust the answer versus maybe I misunderstood you or doesn't exactly understand the use of that particular field? That's where we're starting. And that's something they're going to have out within the next six months. Two years from now, just being able to go to clients and say, yeah, not only are we able to build you this solution, you're gonna get access to this tool where your most

inexperienced user is just gonna be able to come in and type in a question like they're putting into Google search and a very reasonable analytical answer is going to come back to them in the form of charts and graphs to help answer the question. That is empowering people with data in a way where throughout the day in their job, they can ask questions, get real time answers, and be able to impact decisions that they're making. And that's the ultimate goal of anybody that does what we do is empower people to make better decisions with data. Right?

A

Aaron Bock 42:06

That's awesome. I didn't even really know that that existed yet. But I could see where that would be wildly helpful. We ask every podcast guest, you have an audience, you are standing in front of the United States, and they're all watching Kris Moniz, or anywhere in the world. And everyone's watching you and they want to hear what you have to say. You're giving them advice. I heard some earlier but I'm curious, like, what advice do you give if you have one, one piece of advice to give to folks?

K

Kris Moniz 42:34

There's a lot of answers to that question. But I'm assuming this has to do with data specifically?

A

Aaron Bock 42:39

Well, make it data specific, what do you want to tell people about data?

K

Kris Moniz 42:46

Probably the biggest piece of advice I would give them is, data is your most valuable asset that you don't know what it's worth is. And one of the things we constantly advise clients on is you are collecting, creating or partnering with others that are acquiring data on your behalf every day. And depending on the business you're in, the volume of that can be relatively small to humongous. Every bit of that data has value, you just don't know exactly what that value is yet. And anytime you have an opportunity to make a decision on should I be retaining that data, or letting it disappear into the ether? The answer needs to always be retain it. For the least amount of cost and effort certainly. Find ways to do that in a repetitive fashion where no piece of data goes unstored somewhere. But keep it because you have no idea three years from now, if that data suddenly becomes the difference between you growing 5% or 50%.

A

Aaron Bock 43:58

That is great, great, great advice. Kris, I want to thank you for joining the IT Matters podcast. Thank you to you and Centric for always being a great partner out there and I know that you all have done great work for our customers. And for those listening, if you're interested in talking with Kris and his team, please reach out. We'll get you guys in contact. Thank you to all the

listeners out there. Please remember to follow us on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, your YouTube, whatever your favorite platform is. Have a great end to 2023, we will see you in 2024, and thank you for for listening to the IT Matters podcast.



Kris Moniz 44:38

Thanks, Aaron.



Narrator 44:41

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